

Peter Adomeit to Appropriations Committee February 17. 2017

My name is Peter Adomeit. I am President of the Board of Litchfield Performing Arts and I am here to urge you to restore funding for Litchfield Jazz Festival. I am also the parent of two successful young adults who are products of Litchfield Jazz Camp, the teaching arm of Litchfield Jazz Festival.

A parent of a young, talented Jazz Camper wrote this to us on the occasion of the recent passing of Arthur Muir, our organization's co-founder.

"In a world where most people just complain about what's wrong, you chose to put your heart, imagination, energies, and so many resources into actually making it a better place. Litchfield Jazz Camp is a masterpiece. Like all masterpieces it inspires all of us - musicians or not - to seek something higher and more beautiful in ourselves and those around us."

Without Litchfield Jazz Festival, Litchfield Jazz Camp, the jewel in the crown of our non-profit organization, would never have existed. Today its 350+ students—25% of whom receive financial support—are all invited to play for the public at the Litchfield Jazz Festival each summer. The Festival provides what, for most, is a first public performance as a real, improvising musician, on a real stage, before a real audience. This peak experience leads to lives with real meaning – successful lives in every sense.

But, we are here to consider practical matters – why to include or eliminate funding for the Litchfield Jazz Festival, among others. There is one good financial reason to keep this program in the budget: it leverages large amounts of money.

Between the Festival and its Camp and other activities of Litchfield Performing Arts, all of which would be negatively impacted by withdrawal of state support, the Litchfield Jazz Festival leverages about 3 million dollars in economic impact. Half of this comes from people from outside the state, the ultimate goal of any tourism magnet. And the Festival is exactly that.

With an average of 5,000 visitors annually, the fest itself creates \$1.5 Million Dollars in economic impact from on-site sales, taxes on visitor purchases regionally, hotels, B&Bs, car rentals, restaurant meals, gas purchases, and more. Once introduced to North Western Connecticut by the Fest, these visitors return again and again. (These and other statistics here are derived from annual surveys of attendees, both at the Fest and after it via Survey Monkey.)

Litchfield Jazz Camp, in residence in New Milford for a month each summer, has an economic impact of over \$900,000. With taxable salaries and other programs at Litchfield Performing Arts we reach a total \$3M impact.

This is not chump change. So the choice before this committee is to recommend defunding Litchfield Jazz Festival and perhaps lose one of the best cultural events Connecticut has to offer, and with it a major economic driver, or continue to fund it – better yet restore to it the \$50K it was originally awarded – and retain the force it creates, economically, culturally, and for our children.